Foundations of College Writing- Interview Assignment (due 2/11/13)

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So I’ll admit that when I saw we had an assignment that involved interviewing someone, my heart sank a little bit, but after speaking to Angela Trop, LCSW, BCD (Licensed Certified Social Worker, Board Certified Diplomate; in clinical social work) I became excited. Mrs. Trop is a clinical social worker who works as a counselor for people of all ages. She is passionate about her work and knows that she will work in this career for the rest of her life. She does quite a few writings in regards to her job and while she says some of the paperwork is “boring”; it’s worth it because she loves helping her clients.

Mrs. Trop writes daily! Whenever she has a new client, she has to fill out what’s called a “psych soc”, sometimes referred to as a “bio psych soc”, which is an essay-like report about the client. The first paragraph is about the present problems the client has or needs help with also known as “medical necessities”. The second paragraph is about the client’s background, whether that is about his/her family, education, drug/alcohol usage, is up to the client. It’s any information the client gives Mrs. Trop in regards to part of his/her life and how he/she got there. The third paragraph is about obstacles that the client is facing or will have to face in the future and other paragraphs include information like: strengths, techniques Mrs. Trop thinks she will use, and a diagnosis. Another writing she must do occurs during every session! These are called “progress notes”, which cannot be typed; they legally need to be hand written. They contain information about what occurred during the 50 minute session with the client, what she observes and what she suggests. Progress notes need to be formally written, she cannot be creative with her writings; she could actually lose her license this way!! Mrs. Trop does not fall into the stereo-typed televised version of a counselor (sitting quietly, while taking notes on a clipboard) because she actually doesn’t write while having discussions with her clients, she waits until after they leave to write down the information! She makes these progress notes very vague for the chance that she may be subpoenaed or audited at some point. She says she tries to make the notes as “vanilla” as possible because she doesn’t want something she wrote down to cause the trust built up during sessions and destroy any relationships with her clients. Mrs. Trop does her job effectively through her writings and protects her clients while doing so.

Mrs. Trop’s purposes for writing are pretty self-explanatory. She started off my joking “to get paid”. She is definitely right, I wasn’t even thinking along this line as a possible answer to this question but her answer makes perfect sense. There has to be written proof that she is doing her job! So she has a legal obligation to write down information about her clients. She also writes so she can remember details about her clients. For example, if one of her clients is a student, and the student had a performance coming up, Mrs. Trop would then ask about how it went the next time she saw him/her. This is advice we can all use in our daily lives, to just remember the small details about someone, it reminds the people that we care about that they truly are cared for and I can honestly say, that within the hour that I spoke to Mrs. Trop, that she really does care about her clients’ well-being.

Mrs. Trop has quite a few audiences that she writes for. These audiences include: insurance companies, doctors, lawyers, Children & Youth, and sometimes school systems. She writes back and forth to doctors because they need to discuss the client’s medications and she would talk to lawyers in certain cases if the client has some sort of disability. The other audiences just depend on the specific clients and cases.

Mrs. Trop gets a couple things out of her writing. For starters, she gains clarity of the clients’ problems; she is able to get a better picture of certain experiences or events. Secondly, writing provokes new ideas. This means that it assists her to come up with more questions to ask. While talking with her she used me as an example to explain, “If you (meaning me) were my client, I might ask you what it’s like being a twin” (since I have a twin brother). Thirdly and conclusively, all of the written information helps her to have a better understanding of her clients.

She was very intrigued by the question about research articles because she loves to read about the experts in her field of work! She listed a few of the people in her field that she likes reading the works of. One of them is, Daniel J. Sigel M.D., who focuses on the brain and how it works in regards to human behavior. Others include, Sue Johnson who writes about “emotional focus therapy”, Matt Siegel who studies difficult adolescents, and her favorite of all time is Irvin Yalom’s clinical writing. So many research writers inspire her and have an effect on how she handles different situations in her practice.

Mrs. Trop works so hard for other people and really has a passion for engaging with her clients. She loves helping her clients and seeing how they progress throughout their counseling sessions. Even though she says that the papers and forms she needs to fill out are boring, she says that there is nothing boring about the profession itself. She has worked in many different social work settings including prisons!! She really believes in the kind of help that social workers can offer to others and gets an enormous amount of satisfaction out of her career. I am so inspired by her!